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Résumé de l'article

Cet article s'inscrit dans le cadre de l'histoire de la famille au Canada et remet en question certains stéréotypes concernant les familles canadiennes francophones et anglophones. Il s'attache tout particulièrement aux cantons d'Alfred et de Caledonia situés dans le comté de Prescott où les deux groupes sont bien représentés.

Les hypothèses qui y sont émises résultent d'une étude systématique des recensements de 1851, 1861 et 1871 et d'une lecture attentive des sources qualitatives disponibles. Elles concernent la dimension culturelle de l'histoire de la famille et touchent à trois éléments spécifiques : fonction de la famille et organisation domestique, structure familiale et composition du ménage, perspectives familiales en termes de terre et d'évaluation du sol.

Il appert donc, à l'examen des sources, qu'on retrouve chez les familles anglophones et francophones beaucoup plus de similitudes que de différences ; de fait, elles sont très semblables en tout ce qui concerne les deux premiers éléments et ce n'est qu'en regard de la terre qu'elles diffèrent sensiblement, les anglophones préférant les terres hautes et sèches et les francophones les terres basses et humides. Bien que ces constatations se rapportent aux seuls cantons d'Alfred et de Caledonia, on tient ici constamment compte du plus vaste environnement que constitute la vallée de l'Outaouais.

Canadian Families in Cultural Context: Hypotheses from the Mid-Nineteenth Century

CHAD M. GAFFIELD

High fertility, extended structure, cohesive organization, and an other-worldly focus: these are some of the characteristics usually associated with the French-Canadian family in Canadian history. Contrastingly, the English-Canadian family is assumed to historically exhibit average fertility, nuclear composition, detached interpersonal relationships, and a strong material focus. This juxtaposed image is often at least implicit in the ways in which historians view the evolution of Canadian society in the nineteenth century. A consistent association is seen to exist between the respective cultural dimensions of the family and, in the first example, French-Canadian group consciousness, communal attachment, and acceptance of subsistence; and, in the second example, English-Canadian individualism, pioneering spirit, and entrepreneurial initiative.

Within the emerging historiography of the family in Canada, the traditional image has heretofore not come under systematic scrutiny. Historians have focused specifically on either the English-Canadian or French-Canadian context. In the first instance, the work of Michael Katz, David Gagan, Susan Houston, Alison Prentice, and Neil Sutherland has helped open this historical topic. Their writings have revealed much, for example, about English-Canadian family structure in south-central Ontario,[1] the idea of the family in the minds of nineteenth-century social leaders,[2] and the changing concepts of childhood in late Victorian Canada.[3] In the second instance, the research of Hubert Charbonneau, Louise Dechêne, Gérard Bouchard, and Tamara Hareven has significantly advanced our knowledge of the French-Canadian family in various historical periods. As a result of their research, the demographic history of French Canada is increasingly clear,[4] the nature and importance of the family in early

1 Michael Katz, *The People of Hamilton, Canada West: Family and Class in a Mid-Nineteenth Century City* (Cambridge, Mass., 1975); David Gagan and Herbert Mays, "Historical Demography and Canadian Social History: Families and Land in Peel County, Ontario", *Canadian Historical Review*, (1973); and David Gagan's other articles emerging from the Peel County History Project.

2 Alison Prentice, "Education and the Metaphor of the Family: The Upper Canadian Example", *History of Education Quarterly*, (May 1972); and Susan Houston, "The Victorian Origins of Juvenile Delinquency", *History of Education Quarterly*, (1973).

3 Neil Sutherland, *Children in English-Canadian Society: Framing the Twentieth-Century Consensus* (Toronto, 1976).

4 Hubert Charbonneau, *Vie et mort de nos ancêtres: étude démographique* (Montréal, 1975); and Hubert Charbonneau, ed., *La population du Québec: études rétrospectives* (Québec, 1973).

Montreal well-established,[5] and the character of population patterns and kinship in specific areas identified in great detail.[6] Despite the conceptual and methodological achievements of these and other scholars, however, systematic comparative analysis is not yet available and the established stereotypes linger on. No research has forced Canadian historians to specifically reconsider the comparison between English-Canadian families as loose federations of individuals seeking material betterment and French-Canadian families as cohesive units with members collectively seeking other-worldly reward.

The importance of reconsidering this issue is suggested by the experience of two townships in Prescott County, Ontario, during the mid-nineteenth century. In these years, the cultural geography of Prescott was radically changed by the settlement of French Canadians from Quebec. The two specific townships under study were selected for both substantive and technical reasons. On the substantive side, Alfred was selected as an example of a township that did not have any significant English-Canadian settlement at the time of heavy French-Canadian immigration. Caledonia, in contrast, had a substantial English-Canadian presence at the time of Quebec settlement. For methodological reasons, Alfred and Caledonia were suitable because the manuscript census returns for these townships are very legible and the enumerators appear to have carried out their duties quite carefully. Consequently, these sources, as well as literary evidence, are available for systematic examination.

The experience of these two townships suggests that the nature of English-Canadian and French-Canadian families need not be analysed from two fully distinct perspectives. Specifically, comparative analysis of three fundamental aspects of family life reveals significant similarities and unexpected differences between the two cultural groups. The three aspects examined are familial activity and domestic organization, family and household structure, and the material perspectives of families in terms of land use and soil conditions. Within these examples, the cultural dimension of Alfred and Caledonia families appears substantially more subtle and complex than heretofore suggested.

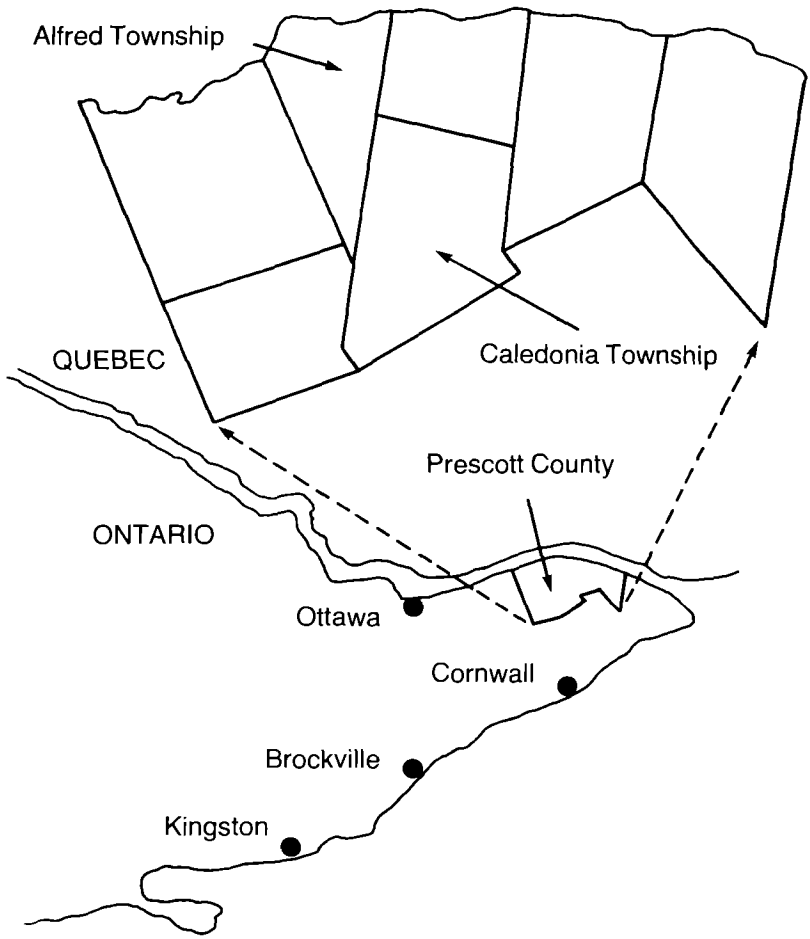
Substantial French-Canadian immigration to Alfred and Caledonia followed an initial settlement of Irish and Scottish pioneers who had firmly established themselves by the early decades of the nineteenth century. Local histories of Prescott County record that David Holmes and Thomas Pattee took up land just after 1800 near the trail which was later named Alfred Road, while James Proudfoot arrived in Caledonia township from Scotland in 1831. The Humphrey Hughes family came to Alfred township from Ireland in 1823 and settled on the south side of Lake George. These pioneers were followed by Thomas and John Brady, Irish immigrants in 1830, who established the tiny community of Bradyville with several other frontier families.[7]

5 Louise Dechêne, *Habitants et marchands de Montréal au XVIIe siècle* (Paris, 1974).

6 Tamara Hareven and Randolph Langenbach, *Amoskeag: Life and Work in an American Factory City* (New York, 1978); and Gérard Bouchard, "Family Structures and Geographic Mobility at Laterrière, 1851-1835", *Journal of Family History*, (Winter 1977).

7 These and the following examples of this section are drawn from two very helpful local histories of Prescott County: C. Thomas, *History of the Counties of Argenteuil, Quebec and Prescott Ontario form the earliest settlement to the present* (Montreal, 1896), pp. 621-38; and Lucien Brault, *Histoire des comtés unis de Prescott et de Russell* (L'Orignal, Ont., 1965), pp. 189-207.

Map of Prescott County



Early settlers in Alfred and Caledonia also came from the northern United States or were descendants of United Empire Loyalists. John Cashion was the son of a New England colonist who had settled in Ontario during the late eighteenth century. Cashion came to Alfred in 1823 where he married and established his own household in 1837. Many Americans immigrated to Prescott County during the 1820s and 1830s, including Charles Gates who came with his father to Caledonia from Massachusetts. Frequently, immigrants from the United States were joined in the journey to Prescott County by pioneers who had temporarily settled in more southern Ontario counties. Duncan McLeod settled in the southwestern corner of Caledonia township after immigrating from Scotland and first residing in Glengarry County. Similarly, while Archibald McLeod immigrated through Glengarry to Caledonia in 1844, Thomas Lytle permanently settled in Alfred in 1831 after arriving in Cornwall from Ireland.

Population turnover undoubtedly characterized the British-origin and American presence in Alfred and Caledonia. Systematic analysis is not yet complete, but it is already clear that individuals and families arrived in and departed from these townships throughout the nineteenth century. However, two specific trends are particularly important: the continuance and sometimes enlargement of homesteads in Alfred and Caledonia by one and sometimes two descendants, and the emigration of other offspring. Daniel McCusker, son of James McCusker who had emigrated from Ireland and settled in Alfred in 1830, took up the family farm and developed it into one of the most successful operations of the township by the 1870s. Similarly, Abraham Hughes, the youngest son of Humphrey Hughes, continued on the homestead after his father's death, "erecting a fine brick residence and outbuildings." His success was duplicated by John Holmes, son of the pioneer Thomas Holmes, who was born in Alfred in 1841. He purchased land adjacent to his father's property in 1870 and, after clearing the soil and building his own residence, he married and established a successful farm.

While the early settlement of a British pioneer was often continued and sometimes enlarged by a particular son, other offspring migrated to different parts of Ontario or to the United States. The land settled in Caledonia by Philip Downing was inherited by his son, John, while another son emigrated to the United States. The third son of James Proudfoot remained on the homestead while his six siblings left to seek their fortune in other parts of Ontario. Similarly, the pioneer Cashion family included nine children, seven of whom migrated to neighbouring Russell County or to the United States, while two continued the family farm.

The continuance of many early settlements and the out-migration of surplus offspring combined to maintain a relatively constant number of English-speaking residents in Alfred and Caledonia throughout the mid-nineteenth century. During the 1851-71 period, the number of British-origin residents slowly declined in Caledonia and slowly increased in Alfred; no general trend is evident. The English Canadians in Caledonia decreased from 970 at mid-century to 817 in 1871 while their Alfred counterparts increased from 265 to 348 during the same period.

After 1840, French-Canadian immigration radically changed the cultural complexion of these townships. While the number of British-origin residents remained about constant, the proportion of French-Canadian settlers increased dramatically. The first French Canadians apparently came from adjoining areas of Canada East in the late 1830s and 1840s. Damase Brunet arrived in Alfred township from Saint-Clet in 1830, while Michel Parisien came from Vaudreuil in 1835 and Joseph D'Aoust from Saint-Benoit in 1840. The village of Lefaivre in Alfred was first settled by H. Lefaivre, who migrated with his family from Saint-Hermas in 1848.[8] The settlement of

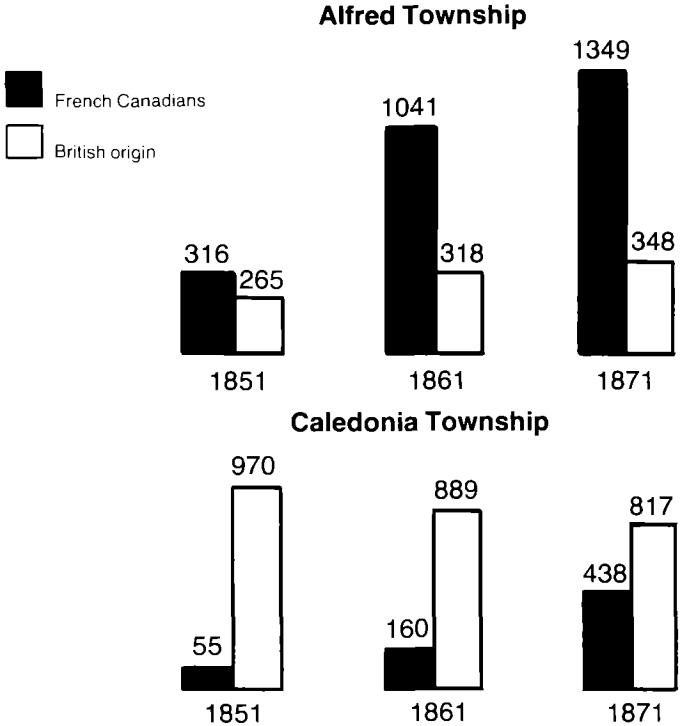
8 Thomas, *History*, pp. 631-3. The circumstances which motivated French-Canadian emigration from nineteenth-century Quebec developed from the interaction of severe economic difficulties and population pressure. See W.H. Parker, "A New Look at Unrest in Lower Canada in the 1830's", *Canadian Historical Review*, XL (1959). Also see Robert Leslie Jones, "French-Canadian Agriculture in the St. Lawrence Valley, 1815-1850", *Agricultural History*, (1942); and Fernand Ouellet, *Histoire économique et sociale du Québec 1760-1850* (Montréal/Paris, 1966).

these and other French Canadians lowered the English-speaking residents to minority status in Alfred in 1851 and increased the French-Canadian presence in Caledonia to 35 per cent in 1871 (see Graph I).

French-Canadian settlement in Alfred and Caledonia was substantially the result of the immigration of families rather than of individuals. The dimensions of this form of migration are indicated by the proportion of French-Canadian families in the townships which included at least one Quebec-born child at the time of the mid-century enumerations. In 1851, for example, 38 per cent of the settled French-Canadian families in Alfred included Quebec-born children; this proportion was 54.6 per cent in 1861 and 45.3 per cent in 1871. These percentages are significant in that families with Quebec-born children represent a minimum estimate of this form of migration. Many other French-Canadian families may have immigrated to Alfred with children who subsequently left their parents before a census year. Clearly, therefore, this evidence suggests that French Canadians maintained familial stability and continuity in coming to eastern Ontario.

Graph I

Comparison of British-origin and French-Canadian Population Figures, 1851-1871



Similar estimates of the importance of family settlement are not available for the English-Canadian example, since the birthplaces of their children are almost uniformly Upper Canadian. Nonetheless, it is clear that, however they arrived in Alfred and Caledonia, both cultural groups characteristically resided as members of assembled families during the mid-nineteenth century. In most cases, these families were nuclear in form. In the 1851-71 period, the number of households in Alfred and Caledonia which included relatives outside the conjugal family unit was never very substantial, although an upward trend is evident. In Alfred, the proportion of French-Canadian households with such relatives rose slightly from 9.5 per cent in 1851 to 12.8 per cent in 1871. Similarly, English-Canadian households with relatives increased from 5 per cent in 1851 to 14.5 per cent in 1871 (see Table I). These increases appear to have been related to the growing stability and more established nature of the township, and perhaps to the subsequent immigration of kin. In either instance, no cultural difference is evident.

Table I

Percentage of Households with Relatives Outside the Conjugal Family Unit, Alfred Township

	French Canadian	British origin
1851	9.5	5.0
1861	11.8	10.0
1871	14.5	12.8

The economic activity of the nuclear families in Alfred and Caledonia during the mid 1800s was based on two forms of land exploitation: first, the use and sale of lumber and other wood products and, second, the establishment of agriculture. In Alfred and Caledonia, economic security for most resident families was afforded by participation in both these forms of land exploitation. While households were characteristically established by those with primarily agricultural ambitions, the successful lumber industry had a significant impact on the households. Lumbering offered seasonal employment for certain family members, a market for agricultural produce, and an important reward for the onerous task of land clearing. All able family members were expected to participate in some form of agriculture or lumbering and, by pooling the contribution of each member, many families were able to survive the frontier conditions.

The importance of land is suggested by the occupational structures of Alfred township during the 1851-71 period. Within Alfred, the character and distribution of occupational titles reflect the fully rural nature of society in eastern Ontario at this time. In each year of census enumeration, farmers and labourers predominate among those residents listed with occupations. For both English- and French-Canadian males,

these titles were closely associated with age. Labourers were mostly younger than age twenty-five, while farmers were characteristically older (see Table II). While census evidence cannot be used to infer developmental patterns without the support of other sources, the relationship of age and occupation does suggest that work as a labourer normally preceded status as a farmer for young males in Alfred.

Table II

Occupational Structure of Alfred Township.
Age of Farmers and Labourers by Cultural Orgin

		French Canadians		British Origin	
	Age	Labourer	Farmer	Labourer	Farmer
1851	10-24	34	0	27	0
	over 24	29	31	7	32
1861	10-24	27	6	22	0
	over 24	58	102	15	43
1871	10-24	20	81	0	25
	over 24	38	174	2	65

While experience as a labourer appears to have been a life course phase for both cultural groups, the continued importance of the labouring group among the French Canadians after age twenty-five is somewhat distinct. Particularly in 1861, French-Canadian adult males more frequently retained a labourer designation than did their English-Canadian counterparts. The apparently weaker movement of French Canadians away from "labouring" after early adulthood was also evident in the 1871 census from Alfred. It should be noted, however, that the enumerator of this census considered males to be farmers whether or not they farmed on their own behalf or simply as younger members of a family effort. Whereas the 1851 and 1861 census enumerators followed instructions to describe the son of a farmer as a "labourer" if he "works for the benefit of his parent",[9] the 1871 enumerator listed all such sons as farmers. Consequently, farmers predominate among working males in 1871, even during the teenage years. Conversely, individuals listed as labourers were undoubtedly wage-earners principally employed outside their own household or engaged to farm the land of someone else. This distinction makes clear that French Canadians more frequently than English Canadians did not assume the farmer title as they grew older, but rather continued as wage-earners or tenants. English Canadians who did not acquire land in early adulthood apparently left their families in Alfred and sought their fortune elsewhere.[10]

9 For a discussion of the enumerators' instruction in 1851 and 1861, see David Gagan, "Enumerator's Instructions for the Census of Canada, 1852 and 1861", *Histoire Sociale*, (November 1974).

10 Record-linkage for the manuscript enumerations of 1851, 1861 and 1871 has not yet been accomplished, so this possibility must remain speculative. However, the records of local histories do lend supporting evidence. For Alfred and Caledonia townships, see Thomas, *History*, pp. 621-38; and Brault, *Histoire*, pp. 189-207.

The life course experience of status as a labourer for young men was related to the opportunity for seasonal employment in some aspect of the lumber industry, either in local saw mills during the summer months or in the shanties during winter. This kind of temporary employment was an important source of supplementary income for family economies, but it also had special significance for the process of family formation itself. Labouring in saw mills or shanties provided adolescent males with the opportunity to acquire enough capital for marriage and formation of a separate household. The household structure of Alfred and Caldonia indicates that enough capital had to be saved to cover both these events before marriage could be considered. Among both English Canadians and French Canadians, marriage appears to have been dependent upon the ability to establish a separate household. Households in these townships which included more than one conjugal family unit appear to have been serving only as temporary residences for immigrating families. Heavy immigration at mid century pushed the proportion of such households to over 10 per cent in 1861 Alfred and Caledonia, but this increased proportion was only temporary. By 1871, as both townships grew in stability, the proportion of households with more than one family did not even approach 5 per cent (see Table III). These trends emphasize the importance of a young couple's ability to establish a separate household as a condition for marriage among both English Canadians and French Canadians. In this process of family formation, seasonal employment in the lumber industry played an important role and appears to explain the relationship of age to occupational status during the 1851-71 period.

Table III

Percentage of Households with more than one Conjugal Family Unit

	Alfred	
	French Canadian	British Origin
1851	9.5	7.5
1861	16.5	15.0
1871	3.4	.0
	Caledonia	
	French Canadian	British Origin
1851	.0	4.3
1861	10.3	10.4
1871	1.6	2.3

The number of males in Alfred and Caledonia who were not labourers or farmers was never significant during the mid-nineteenth century and, in fact, diminished after 1851. Most non-agricultural occupations involved woodworking; there were carpenters, shingle-makers, sawyers, wooddealers, and lumberers. By 1871, however, labourers and farmers completely dominated the occupational structure of these

townships despite the rapid population growth of the 1850s and 1860s. The lack of occupational diversity in Alfred and Caledonia resulted from the growth of specific centres of economic activity outside these townships. The development of particular villages as service points centralized the residences of carpenters, sawyers, coopers, and other artisans. This centralization engendered a reciprocal decline in artisanal work outside villages and caused a simplification of occupational structures in hinterland areas despite increased settlement. As villages such as L'Orignal and Hawkesbury expanded,[11] Prescott townships in which no real villages developed became increasingly "rural". In this way, the importance of land became even greater among families in Alfred and Caledonia during the course of the mid-nineteenth century. This development emphasized the inter-relationships of family formation, household structure, and occupational experience for both English Canadians and French Canadians.

The proportion of females with occupational titles in Alfred and Caledonia was never significant, but the occupational structures of these townships represent only part of the actual dimensions of labour in the mid-nineteenth century. Contemporary observations and local historical accounts agree that all men, women, and children actively contributed to the well-being of both English-Canadian and French-Canadian families whether or not they were "employed" or perceived themselves to have occupations. Full family participation was characteristic of all phases of settlement in eastern Ontario beginning with the initial stages of land clearing and continuing thereafter. Each family member had specific tasks throughout this process.

Land clearing first involved the cutting of underbush and small trees, a job accomplished by the adolescents of settling families. Younger children supervised by mothers then piled the small trees, underbrush and branches into heaps where they remained until sufficient decay facilitated "burning off".[12] As this work progressed, the father and older sons commenced chopping the large trees which were afterwards stripped of their branches and cut into logs. Once a piece of land was available, planting was begun immediately. As in land clearing, each member of a settling family contributed to the growing of agricultural produce. The female head of the household organized the planting of vegetables such as turnips, potatoes, and peas which would

11 By 1881, the villages of L'Orignal and Hawkesbury were enumerated separately from the townships in which they were located. At that time, L'Orignal included 853 residents while the established centre of Hawkesbury had a population of 1,920. See *The Report on the Fourth Census of Canada*, 1881.

12 The process of settlement in the Ottawa Valley is described in various contemporary and historical works; see J.L. Gourlay's well-known *History of the Ottawa Valley* (Montreal, 1896); E.C. Guillet's *The Pioneer Farmer and Backwoodsman* (Toronto, 1963); Joshua Fraser's *Shanty, Forest, and River Life* (Montreal, 1883); and A.R.M. Lower, *Settlement and the Forest Frontier in Eastern Canada* (Toronto, 1936). The memoirs of a mid-nineteenth century resident indicate that immigrant families in Prescott and Russell Counties also depended on the help of previously established settlers. Mrs. Ennid Christie wrote in 1860 that settlement had a collective dimension: "... the neighbours would all help one another .... As a rule, as each house was done they would have a little party"; see Public Archives of Ontario, "A Narrative Account of Farm Life Along the South Nation River...", (manuscript), 1860, p. 2.

supply new families with initial food requirements.[13] The men of the family concentrated on hay and oats, the products most easily grown during the first years of settlement.[14] This work was paralleled by the labour of younger children who began cultivation of other fruits and vegetables including "bluets, fraises, framboises, et groseilles sauvages." The produce of the children's gardens was then made into "des plats exquis, des confitures et des liqueurs" by the female household head.[15]

During the winter months, land was further cleared and threshing and milling was accomplished usually by the male household head and one or two of the family's male adolescents. During this time, women and children continued the domestic economic activity, often including the production of textile articles for family use. As soon as possible after settlement, women began weaving blankets, rugs, and fabrics for clothing. These materials were produced in response to the needs of their families. Women organized this domestic industry on the basis of full participation by their sons and daughters. Younger children frequently contributed by spinning. The majority of Alfred and Caledonia families produced their own fabric for clothing, generally about twenty-five yards of "home-made cloth and flannel".[16]

This kind of economic contribution was vital to the welfare of families in eastern Ontario in the mid-nineteenth century. Although rarely included in the occupational structures of townships such as Alfred and Caledonia, the participation of women and children as has been described was a crucial cog in the domestic wheel of economic survival. By contributing to land clearing, agricultural production, and domestic industry, the "unemployed" were responsible for a large part of the material well-being of frontier families. Without this help, the lives of those persons listed in the census with occupational titles would have dramatically altered.[17]

In this sense, both English-Canadian and French-Canadian families in Alfred and Caledonia conform to the classic analysis of peasant society suggested by the Russian economist, A.V. Chayanov.[18] His analysis posits that each family member in such societies is called upon to actively contribute to the material well-being of the family as a collective unit. Children are accepted as purely "consumers" only in their early years; they are expected to become "producers" and, thereby, contributors to the

13 William Greening, *The Ottawa* (Toronto, 1961), p. 69.

14 Robert Leslie Jones, *History of Agriculture in Ontario, 1613-1830* (Toronto, 1946), p. 114.

15 Alexis de Barbezieux, *Histoire de la province ecclésiastique d'Ottawa* (Ottawa, 1897), I, p. 287.

16 Manuscript Census, 1871; also see Greening, *The Ottawa*, p. 70.

17 The importance to the family economy of the labour of "housewives" has been the focus of several recent studies. For example, see the debate which emerged among contributors to the *New Left Review*: Wally Secombe, "The Housewife and her Labour under Capitalism", No. 83; and Margaret Coulson, Branka Magas, and Hilary Wainwright, "The Housewife and her Labour under Capitalism: a Critique", No. 89. Also see Vanier Institute of The Family, *The Family in The Evolution of Agriculture* (Ottawa, 1968).

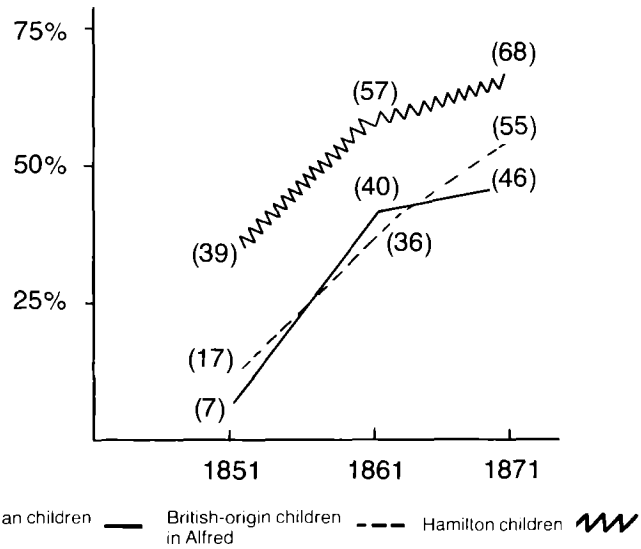
18 A.V. Chayanov, "On the Theory of Non-Capitalist Economic Systems", Christel Lane, trans., and *Peasant Farm Organization*, R.E.F. Smith, trans., in D. Thorner, B. Kerblay, and R.E.F. Smith, eds., *A.V. Chayanov on the Theory of Peasant Economy* (Homewood, Ill. 1966).

family economy as soon as they are physically able. In Chayanov's theory, families in peasant societies are economic units composed of individual members collectively working for the material benefit of the units themselves. There are no single breadwinners; rather, there are family economies.

The need for full family participation in the pursuit of material well-being undoubtedly helps explain why school attendance rates in Alfred and Caledonia lagged behind urban centres such as Hamilton in the mid-nineteenth century. The nature of the family in Hamilton appears to have been quite different from the Chayanov-type families in rural eastern Ontario. Perhaps most significantly, families in Hamilton were not primarily economic units. Increasingly during the nineteenth century, the place of work for most residents was distinct from the household. The potential labour-value of children and youth could not always be immediately realized within the family context and the opportunities for youngsters of employment outside household were not equal to the number of possible young workers.[19] As a result, school attendance in Hamilton, as in other urban centers, was much greater than, for example, in Alfred (see Graph II).

Graph II

Percentage of Children Ages 5 to 16 Attending School in Alfred Township and Hamilton, 1851-1871



Source for Hamilton data: Ian Davey, "Educational Reform and the Working Class: School Attendance in Hamilton Ontario, 1851-1891", (Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1975).

19 Katz, *The People of Hamilton, passim*.

The connection between schooling and the life-cycle transition of children from "consumers" to "producers" in rural societies is further suggested by the age structure of the population of school attenders in Alfred township. As shown on Graph III only a small group of parents sent their children to school beyond the age of twelve. This pattern is similar for both English Canadians and French Canadians and is apparent in the evidence of 1851, 1861, and 1871, despite the fact that attendance among young children increased significantly. Thus, while the mid-nineteenth century promotion of schooling evidently engendered much greater attandance among young children by 1871, the need for collective endeavour within individual family economies in Alfred and Caledonia meant that teenagers remained unavailable for the classroom.

In emphasizing the importance of full family participation in rural contexts of labour-intensive production, Chayanov further suggests that family size plays a major role in determining the level of economic activity which families can achieve.[20] This relationship certainly existed in Alfred and Caledonia. The difficulty and cost of hiring wage labour as well as the non-mechanized nature of production meant that the contribution of children had a significant impact on the destiny of local families. Since this contribution extended from participation in land clearing, spinning, and gardening to later employment in the shanties, the number of able-bodied members upon which each family could draw determined the scope of their economic activities and the extent to which they could profit from the material possibilities of residence in Alfred and Caledonia at mid century.

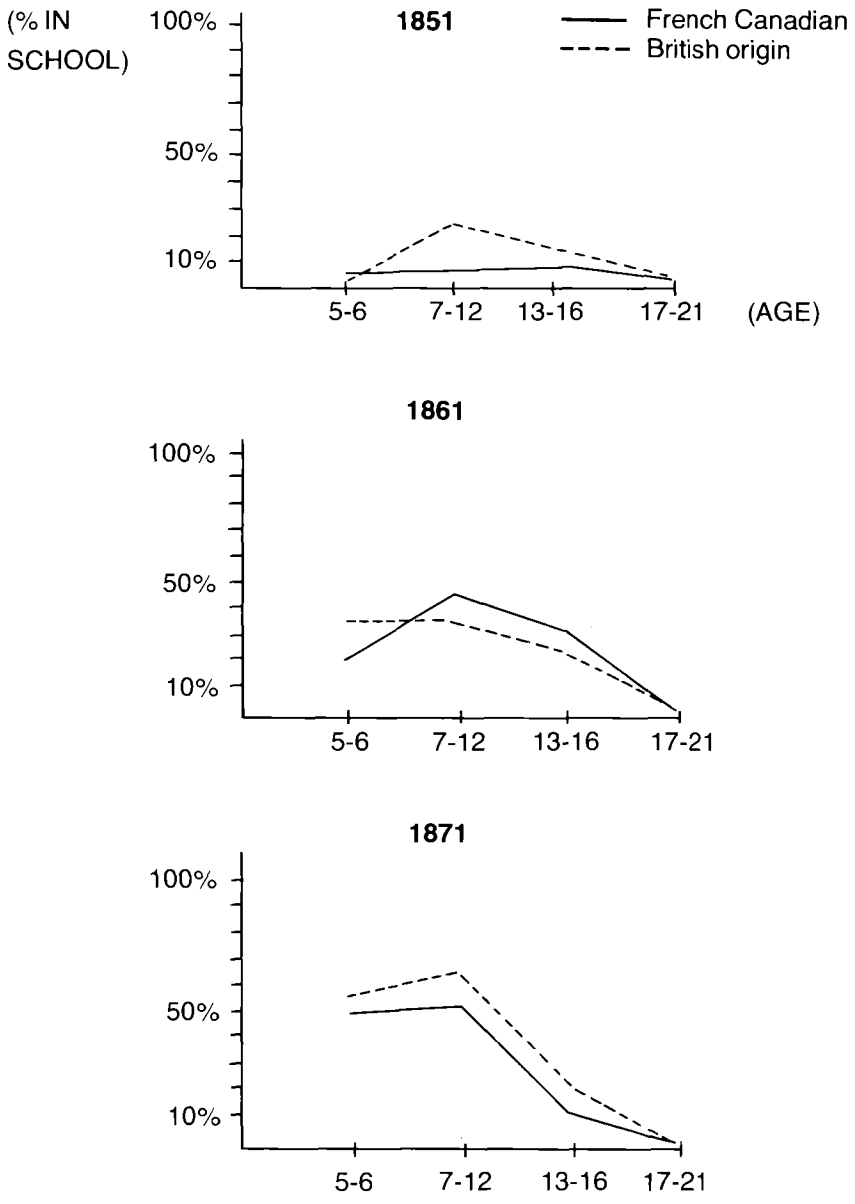
The role of family size in regulating economic activity appears to have been recognized positively by both English-Canadian and French-Canadian families. Throughout mid century, married women of both cultural groups gave birth at regular intervals throughout their child-bearing years. This demographic pattern can be shown by dividing the number of unmarried and resident children by the number of families in various age groups of married women. The division produces an average number of children for families at different stages in the life course of mothers (see Graph IV). Clearly, families began at an earlier age for French-Canadian women and their families consistently included a somewhat greater average number of children throughout the mothers' life course. However, the general demographic curves are remarkably similar particularly for families of women in the twenty to thirty-nine age group. Both English-Canadian and French-Canadian families appear to have been enlarged with regularity; the average established family within either cultural sector could have drawn upon the labour of several younger teenagers. French-Canadian families usually had an advantage of one child but, especially in families with mothers younger than age forty, this was simply the result of earlier family formation.

The way in which the timing of family formation relates to the variation in family size between English Canadians and French Canadians is illustrated by the relationship of age to marital status during the mid-nineteenth century (see Graph V). In general terms, French Canadians married earlier than English Canadians. Among males, most French Canadians were married by their late twenties, while English Canadians did not reach the same proportion until their early thirties. The cultural discrepancy is similar

20 Chayanov, *Peasant Farm Organization*, especially Chapter One.

Graph III

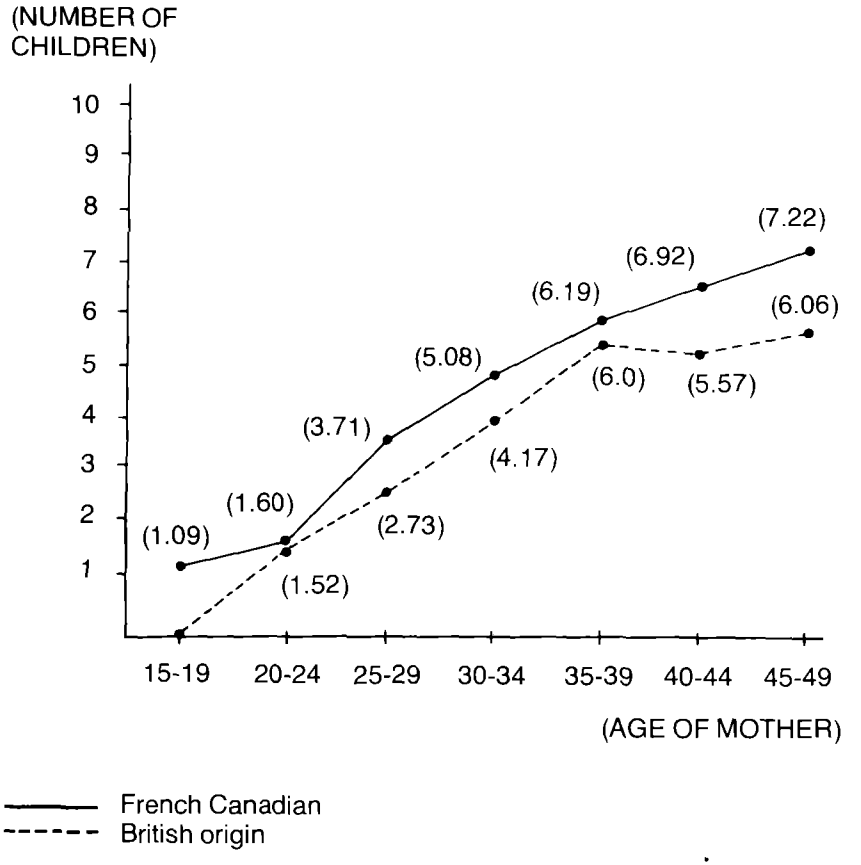
Age Structure of School Attendance in Alfred Township, 1851-1871



for females, although brides appear to have married two or three years younger than their husbands. It is this cultural difference which undoubtedly explains why French-Canadian families were slightly larger than English-Canadian families with mothers in the same age cohort. Once marriages were formed, however, the families of both cultural groups grew steadily.

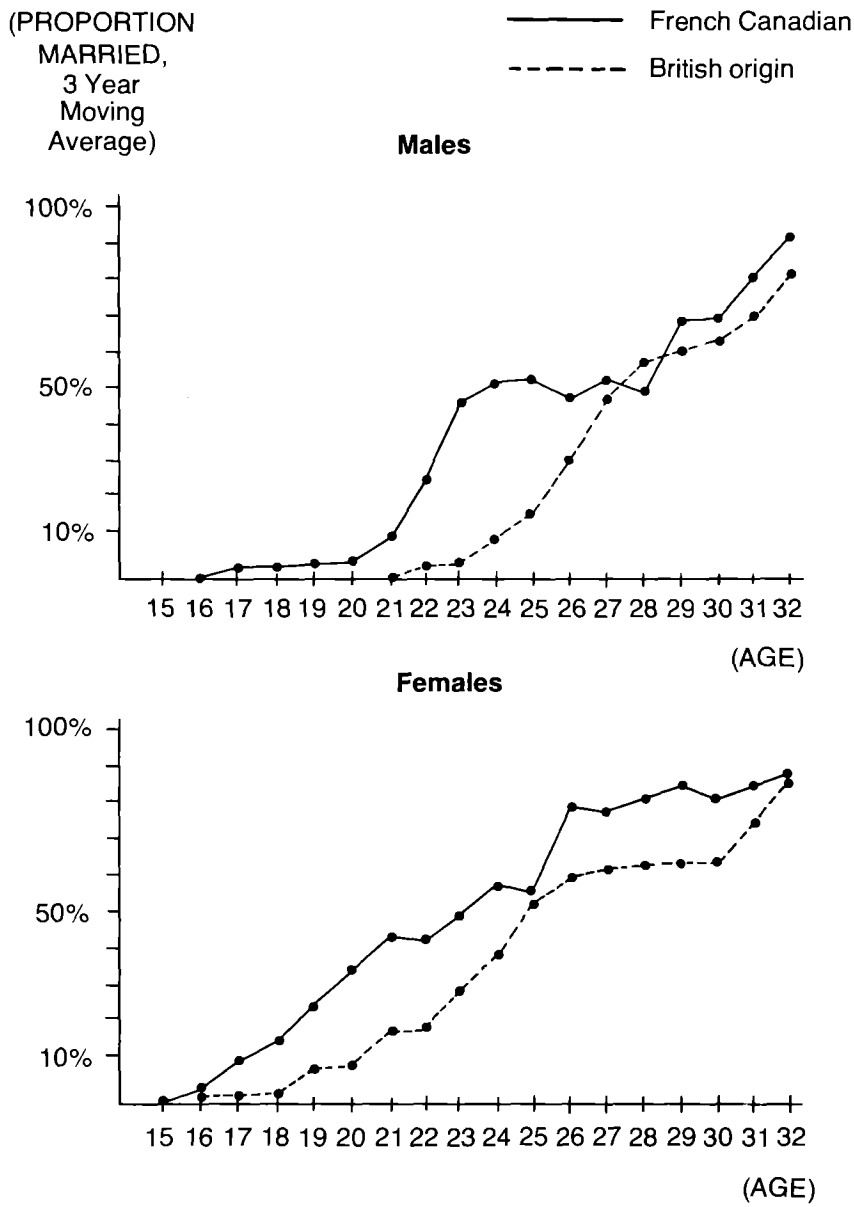
Graph IV

Family Size by Age of Mothers in Alfred and Caledonia Townships, 1851-1871



Graph V

Age by Marital Status, Alfred and Caledonia



The dimensions of family size in Alfred and Caledonia may have been at least in part the result of an energetic response among both English and French Canadians to economic possibilities during the mid-nineteenth century. In Chayanov's terms, families which were able to draw upon the productive contribution of several offspring were at a distinct advantage. As earlier suggested, this was particularly apparent in the processes of land clearing and improvement. For most families in Alfred and Caledonia during the 1851-71 period, these were sizeable undertakings. Among farming families, the vast majority of English-Canadian and French-Canadian families owned land of more than fifty acres. The population of agricultural families in Caledonia with lots of less that fifty acres never exceeded 10 per cent. In Alfred, a slightly larger proportion of French-Canadian families owned land of between twenty and forty-nine acres, but a substantial majority held parcels of fifty or more acres (see Table IV).

Improvement of the sizeable lots was undertaken enthusiastically by families of both cultural groups; there seems to have been no satisfaction with subsistence. In this sense, the communities of Alfred and Caledonia deviated sharply from the Chayanov model of peasant society. In this model, family economies do not actively pursue more than subsistence. However, in Prescott County both English Canadians and French Canadians continued to respond to economic opportunity; they did not curtail activity once basic needs were met. In terms of material ambition, the Chayanov peasant concept does not apply. By pooling the contributions of individual members, families characteristically laboured not only to provide for themselves, but also to produce surplus crops. It was in this way that families in Alfred and Caledonia took advantage of the lumber shanty markets which throughout the mid-nineteenth century relied significantly on the lower Ottawa Valley.

Table IV

Lot Sizes Held By Farmers Who Owned Their Own Land In Alfred and Caledonia, 1861-1871

	French Canadian			British origin		
	0-19 acres	20-49 acres	50 and over	0-19 acres	20-49 acres	50 and over
Caledonia 1861	1	0	10	0	3	103
Caledonia 1871	0	3	41	0	10	109
Alfred 1861	1	15	75	0	1	39
Alfred 1871	0	20	132	2	3	58

The precise proportion of Alfred and Caledonia agricultural produce not required for local family consumption is impossible to estimate in the absence of studies on the annual needs of nineteenth-century families. However, families in these townships certainly appear to have been striving to produce beyond the subsistence level. By 1871, both English-Canadian and French-Canadian farming families held proportions

of cleared land that exceeded their own requirements. In Alfred and Caledonia, the earlier settlement of British-origin immigrants is clearly illustrated by the proportion of farms which included more than twenty acres of cleared land in 1861 as well as in 1871. Throughout this period, the vast majority of English-Canadian farmers held land which appears to have been used for commercial purposes. This pattern is slightly different for French Canadians in 1861, many of whom had not yet had sufficient time to establish commercial farms. In Caledonia, only one French Canadian held a sizeable portion of improved land while in Alfred less than half the *habitant* farmers cultivated twenty or more acres. By 1871, however, French-Canadian farm units in these townships had moved significantly into larger scale production. A full 43 per cent of Quebec-origin farming families in Caledonia had achieved parcels of at least twenty or more improved acres while almost two-thirds of their Alfred counterparts now cultivated similarly large parcels of land (see Table V). All these families were capable of producing surplus crops.[21]

Table V

Percentage of Acres Improved on the Lots of Farmers Who Owned Their Own Land in Alfred and Caledonia

	French Canadian				British origin			
	N	0-19 acres Improved	20-49	50 and over	N	0-19 acres Improved	20-49	50 and Over
Caledonia 1861	11	90.9	9.1	.0	106	19.8	49.1	31.1
Caledonia 1871	44	56.8	34.1	9.1	119	16.0	41.2	42.8
Alfred 1861	91	52.7	45.1	2.2	40	10.0	65.0	25.0
Alfred 1871	152	34.9	52.0	13.1	63	25.4	60.3	14.3

The similarly positive response of English-Canadian and French-Canadian families to economic opportunity in eastern Ontario during the mid-nineteenth century further supports the suggestion that, at least in certain basic ways, the cultural dimension of social evolution during this period is not yet properly understood. The apparently similar economic ambition of families in Alfred and Caledonia is consistent

21 Scholars often use the amount of land under crops to indicate the level of agricultural activity. In one study, Cole Harris analyses the experience of Petite-Nation, a seigneury located on the edge of the Canadian Shield north of the Ottawa River across from Alfred township. Harris suggests that farming in this region was primarily a "subsistence activity". To illustrate his argument, Harris offers several examples of what he intends by both subsistence and commercial farming. Harris describes subsistence farming by the example of one farm in which only seven of one hundred acres had been cleared, and another farm in which seven of 120 acres had been improved. In contrast, Harris indicates the presence of commercial farming in the example of one large 1,229 acre farm in which 320 acres were cleared, and another smaller farm in which 40 of 90 acres were in use. See "Of Poverty and Helplessness in Petite-Nation", *Canadian Historical Review*, (March 1971).

with the earlier analysis of family and household structure, occupation and family formation, and the literary descriptions of family economies. While variations and distinctions are evident in the specific cultural patterns, general similarity is the more important characteristic.

Nonetheless, one crucial issue must still be addressed. If economic opportunity was offered to families in Alfred and Caledonia during the mid 1800s, why did the number of English-Canadian households not increase during the 1851-71 period? What inspired surplus English-Canadian adolescents to seek economic opportunity outside their native area? Does this emigration support the traditional notion that English Canadians, in contrast to French Canadians, actively sought to participate in the supposedly progressive urban and industrial development represented by cities such as Hamilton? Did the emigrants shun the prospect of continued existence in the labour-intensive economy of eastern Ontario and, therefore, seek more "modern" livelihoods?

The answer to these questions appears to be no. Rather, a more subtle and complex phenomenon obtained; it is in this context that a significant cultural dimension divided English and French Canadians. Specifically, differences in the interpretation of land value and soil fertility appear to have been crucial in attracting or repelling aspiring heads of household in townships such as Alfred and Caledonia. The observations of contemporary writers and the actual location of individual settlements show that English-Canadian and French-Canadian families differed dramatically in their opinion of favourable land conditions. Consequently, the availability of certain soil types significantly affected the cultural pattern of settlement in these townships.[22]

The importance of soil type is illustrated clearly by the ways in which specific kinds of land in the Ottawa Valley were viewed and settled by English Canadians and French Canadians. Most geographers consider the eastern counties to have been under glacial coverage well after the land of central and western Ontario had surfaced. As a result, soil development in this region is "several thousand years" behind the rest of the province.[23] In Prescott County, for example, sand and gravelly soils compose over half of the county's land. Most of this less fertile soil is associated with the higher plains of the county. In lower regions, the land is largely clay loams, a soil type with great productive potential. However, these loams are "water-laid, have level topo-

22 In describing the way in which agricultural settlement occurred in nineteenth-century Ontario, Kenneth Kelly lists settler evaluation of land as the first step in this process; see "The Impact of Nineteenth Century Agricultural Settlement on the Land", J. David Wood, ed., *Perspectives on Landscape and Settlement in Nineteenth Century Ontario* (Toronto, 1975). For a general discussion of the importance of custom and tradition to the assessment of ecological characteristics, see A. Spoehr, "Cultural Differences in the Interpretation of Natural Resources", W.L. Thomas, ed., *Man's Role in Changing the Face of the Earth* (Chicago, 1956).

23 See L.S. Chapman and J.G. Putnam's "The Soils of Eastern Ontario", *Scientific Agriculture*, (March 1940). The geographical context of eastern Ontario is examined in J.R. Mackay, "The Regional Geography of the Lower Ottawa Valley", (Ph.D. thesis, University of Montreal, 1949).

graphy, and are stone free", consequently having very poor natural drainage.[24] This land must be drained artificially before its potential productivity can be realized. Geographers, therefore, emphasize that most Prescott soil requires preparation before cultivation can begin; moist clay soils must be drained while the higher, drier, sandy land must be improved by fertilization.[25]

The cultural pattern of English-Canadian and French-Canadian settlement in Prescott was closely related to this topography and soil composition. British-origin settlers consistently displayed a distinct preference for dry sandy plains while French Canadians readily took up wet clay lands. In 1881, the *Dominion Atlas* observed that "vast tracts of low lying land" had been "shunned by settlers of the Anglo-Saxon race." Rather, these settlers had chosen the land of regions which reached an "altitude of some dignity."[26] It was in these regions that early English-speaking settlers had established communities. For example, Simeon Vankleek, a United Empire Loyalist from New York, was travelling in "the Laurentian hills north of the Ottawa when he noticed high land on the south side of the river." He crossed the Ottawa and became the first settler in Prescott's township of West Hawkesbury.[27]

Vankleek's decision to settle on "high land" may have been influenced by the many English-Canadian settlers' guides which warned pioneers to avoid swampy land. These guides emphasized the importance of limiting the initial time and effort needed for cultivation and consequently discouraged settlers from acquiring land which needed drainage. English-Canadian advisors felt that the frequent need to fertilize sandy soil, though not desirable, was far less time-consuming and laborious than the digging of trenches on marshy fields.[28]

Contrastingly, French Canadian leaders urged *habitants* to take up tracts of wet land. In encouraging settlement in the Ottawa Valley, French-Canadian writers described the land being ignored by the British-origin settlers as a "magnifique région".[29] While the *Dominion Atlas* reported that "very extensive areas in Prescott and Russell approach so nearly the definition of the term 'swampy' as to render them almost unfit for cultivation",[30] French Canadians were describing the "grande fertilité" of the same counties.[31] Even later in the nineteenth century, one Quebec

24 Donald G. Cartwright, "French-Canadian Colonization in Eastern Ontario to 1910", (Ph.D. thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1973), p. 201.

25 See Chapman and Putnam, "The Soils of Eastern Ontario".

26 *The Dominion Atlas of the Counties of Prescott and Russell* (1881), p. 58.

27 Max Rosenthal, "Early Post Offices of Prescott County", *B.N.A. Topics*, (January 1967) p. 21.

28 See Guillet, *Pioneer Farmer*, I, p. 274; and Kelly, "Impact of Nineteenth Century Agricultural Settlement", pp. 64-5. English-Canadian writers may also have been concerned about the health implications of settlement in marshy areas. A malaria-type fever named ague was known to be fatal and was associated with regions of wet soil. In 1851, thirty-six people died from ague in Ontario; see the *Census of Canada*, 1851.

29 Joseph Tassé, *La vallée de l'Outaouais: sa condition géographique* . . . (Montreal, 1973), p. 7.

30 *Dominion Atlas* p. 58.

31 Tassé, *La Vallée de l'Outaouais*, p. 9.

leader estimated that "la région des belles terres est très considérable" in the Ottawa Valley.[32]

The perceptions of French-Canadian leaders concerning the value of moist lands in the eastern counties were apparently shared by Quebec immigrants who came to settle in the mid-nineteenth century. The geographer, Donald Cartwright, has systematically examined the land records of Prescott and Russell counties and concluded that the characteristic French-Canadian colonist exhibited a "preference . . . to settle on the wetter clay soils . . . ." Cartwright also found that British settlers showed a "preference for the higher and drier lands associated with the sand and till plains."[33] This distinction is clearly illustrated by the settlement patterns of Alfred and Caledonia townships. The 1851 enumerators of these townships emphasized the predominance of low-lying clay soil. Albert H. James, the Alfred enumerator, noted that:

> part of the township bordering on Longueil is of a clay soil and the west part of the township is for the most part sandy and the southern part of the township across which runs Horse Creek which empties itself into the South Petite Nation River is low and swampy, a portion of that section from the Part of the Great Tamrock Marsh which pervades this township . . . . Alfred is generally considered to be a township of the most inferior in regard to the quality of soil but parts of it is good land and produces pretty good crops.[34]

The enumerator suggested that the "parts of good land", defined as the sandy areas, had already been fully taken up by British-origin settlers and that no more English-Canadian arrivals should be expected. He predicted that whenever Alfred "becomes settled to any further extent or importance, it will be settled by the French Canadians of Lower Canada mainly—or rather it is most like such to be the case."

Philip Downing, the 1851 enumerator for Caledonia township, also recognized the relationship of soil type to patterns of settlement. He similarly estimated the Caledonia land to be of very inferior quality. He described Caledonia as having "generally swampy and cold soil—it embraces on the North for several concessions, the great Caledonia marsh which pervades 3 or 4 townships and is of no value."[35] However, Downing noted that a "tract in this township called the Caledonia Flats through which runs Caledonia Creek is well settled and the soil is of superior quality." It was here that English Canadians had established significant settlements. They were attracted to the "soil of this lay of land which is a sandy loam . . . ." As in Alfred, the full settlement of this kind of land in Caledonia by mid-century meant that the future of the township was not promising in the mind of the enumerator. After describing the unsettled land as "of little value", Downing concluded that "it appears useless to make any further remarks in regard to this township."

The 1851 enumerators' predictions that further English-Canadian settlement

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32 See A. Labelle, *Projet d'une Société de Colonisation du diocèse de Montréal pour coloniser la vallée de l'Ottawa et le nord de ce diocèse* (Montréal, 1879).

33 Cartwright, "French-Canadian Colonization", pp. 230-1.

34 Manuscript Census for Alfred Township, 1851.

35 Manuscript Census for Caledonia Township, 1851.

would not occur in Alfred and Caledonia were fulfilled during the later decades of the nineteenth century when the number of British-origin residents remained almost constant, despite the rapid growth of French-Canadian settlement.[36] The *Dominion Atlas* of 1881 explained that the "peculiarities of soil and surface" characteristic of Alfred township had "militated against the rapid development" of this township by English Canadians. Instead, these "peculiarities" had militated for the heavy immigration of French Canadians. The *Atlas* writers analysed this phenomenon in terms of the importance of cultural tradition. They explained that French Canadians had been "long accustomed to life on the flat lands of the Lower Province", and were thereby prepared for the "cultivation of the semi-swamps" which the early British settlers had ignored.[37] French-Canadian heritage also was said to have provided immigrant *habitants* with appropriate techniques of land clearing. The *Atlas* writers admitted that French Canadians had "proven their efficiency" in the "preliminary clearing" of the difficult low-lying land. In the *Atlas*' analysis, this kind of "efficiency" resulted from French-Canada's specific agricultural tradition which had evolved in the fertile but very moist St. Lawrence Valley. The *Atlas* compilers thereby explained the willingness of Quebec immigrants to settle in Alfred on the basis of the appropriateness of this agricultural tradition to the available land in the township.[38]

The extent to which the *Dominion Altas*' analysis is accurate has yet to be fully investigated, but the general approach does indeed appear promising. Viewed in this way, analysis of settlement patterns rises well above the level of physical determinism.

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36 By the mid-nineteenth century, the farmland of almost all south-central Ontario had been taken up and, at this time, British-origin immigrants must have been forced to at least consider settlement in the easternmost counties. The land shortage in Ontario was the result of "persistent immigration from the British Isles, high rates of natural increase, and exaggerated man-land ratios . . . .": see David Gagan "Geographic and Social Mobility in Nineteenth-Century Ontario: A Microstudy", *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, XII (1976), pp. 152-3. This evidence suggests that British-origin immigrants made a conscious decision not to settle in easternmost Ontario, despite the fact that land was still available.

37 *Dominion Atlas*, p. 60. The French-Canadian ability to cultivate lands previously considered useless by English Canadians gives an ironic twist to the traditional claim of British agricultural superiority. For example, Lord Durham had observed that the "English farmer carried with him the experience and habits of the most improved agriculture in the world . . . . He often took the very farm which the [French] Canadian settlers had abandoned, and, by superior management, made that a source of profit which had only impoverished his predecessor." Durham's observation may have been accurate but, at least in eastern Ontario, the reverse was also true: cited in Jones, "French-Canadian Agriculture in the St. Lawrence Valley", p. 138. An exceedingly promising systematic analysis of agricultural patterns in Canada East is offered in "The Efficiency of the French-Canadian farmer in the Nineteenth Century" by Frank Lewis and Marvin McInnis, Department of Economics, Queen's University, (unpublished paper).

38 *Ibid*. The strong attraction of land for French Canadians in the mid-nineteenth century suggests that Quebec immigrants to Ontario conform to Cole Harris' analysis of the phenomenon of "land hunger" at that time. He argues that immigrants to Ontario at mid-century "craved land"; see Cole Harris and John Warkentin, *Canada Before Confederation* (New York, 1974), p. 128.

Each family's decision to settle can be examined in the context of a judgment of advantage based on marital and fertility expectations, commitment to a family economy, and familiarity with specific agricultural skills. It was the appropriate combination of these elements which made settlement in Alfred and Caledonia attractive to some and unattractive to others. In turn, the culturally-induced soil preferences of settlers related to agricultural tradition, family ideology, and demographic patterns. These preferences undoubtedly explain, at least in part, why the number of English-Canadian families remained relatively constant in Alfred and Caledonia during 1851-71 period. An inheriting offspring remained to take over each English-Canadian farm, but other siblings, faced with the prospect of only low-lying land, decided to seek their fortune elsewhere. This phenomenon also appears to explain the variation in age-at-marriage and therefore family size between English Canadians and French Canadians. As has been shown, marriage in Alfred and Caledonia was dependent upon the ability of aspiring couples to form separate households and, in rural eastern Ontario, land acquisition was the basic necessity. However, the shortage of land attractive to English Canadians as early as mid century meant that aspiring couples who wished to stay in their native townships would have to wait for an inheritance or a vacancy in some other established household. As a result, wedlock was often delayed, much as it was among couples in traditional European peasant society.

In this sense, there was a very significant cultural dimension to the history of the family in Alfred and Caledonia. Tradition and heritage were indeed important in differentiating population patterns in these townships. It is extremely important to note, however, that the basis of this differentiation is not as straightforward as traditionally depicted. Not only were many aspects of English-Canadian and French-Canadian families substantially similar but, in addition, the complexity of the issue of land evaluation suggests that demographic differences may be much more subtle than has yet been appreciated.

At this point, the implications of the experience of Alfred and Caledonia for the larger analysis of the family in Canadian history are no more than suggestive. The nature of the evidence thus far examined and the size of the sample offered by these townships limit the conclusions which can be drawn. Moreover, the experiences of Alfred and Caledonia were the result of a particular convergence of historical forces and the representativeness of the preceding comparative analysis cannot be estimated in even general terms. Nonetheless, it is clear that systematic examination of the families in Alfred and Caledonia has produced findings which do not conform to hitherto accepted images. Empirical comparisons do not support established stereotypes of cultural behaviour and ideologically-laden judgments of social patterns. The suggested avenue of research is one that questions the conventional underpinnings of much Canadian historiography, that discards assumptions about distinct and timeless culturally-defined *mentalités*, and that subjects qualitative observations and aggregate patterns to the scrutiny of empirical evidence at the level of individual families. The similarities and differences of English-Canadian and French-Canadian families in terms of structure, function, and economy suggest the need for a fresh interpretation of this important dimension of the historical process.

Résumé

Cet article s'inscrit dans le cadre de l'histoire de la famille au Canada et remet en question certains stéréotypes concernant les familles canadiennes francophones et anglophones. Il s'attache tout particulièrement aux cantons d'Alfred et de Calédonia situés dans le comté de Prescott où les deux groupes sont bien représentés.

Les hypothèses qui y sont émises résultent d'une étude systématique des recensements de 1851, 1861 et 1871 et d'une lecture attentive des sources qualitatives disponibles. Elles concernent la dimension culturelle de l'histoire de la famille et touchent à trois éléments spécifiques: fonction de la famille et organisation domestique, structure familiale et composition du ménage, perspectives familiales en termes de terre et d'évaluation du sol.

Il appert donc, à l'examen des sources, qu'on retrouve chez les familles anglophones et francophones beaucoup plus de similitudes que de différences; de fait, elles sont très semblables en tout ce qui concerne les deux premiers éléments et ce n'est qu'en regard de la terre qu'elles diffèrent sensiblement, les anglophones préférant les terres hautes et sèches et les francophones les terres basses et humides. Bien que ces constatations se rapportent aux seuls cantons d'Alfred et de Calédonia, on tient ici constamment compte du plus vaste environnement que constitute la vallée de l'Outaouais.